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Audience, style and criticism.

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Summary: The primary focus for this article involves aspects of professional mathematical writing and examines the possibility of a form of literary criticism in relation to it. By means of examples from contemporary style guides for academic articles in mathematics (AMS, MAA), as well as the writing of mathematicians (Hamilton, Dedekind) from earlier eras, and in addition to attention to the notion of ‘audience’ for the writing, the authors identify certain aesthetic elements at work. The article ends with a link to poetry and suggests that mathematics situates itself between rhetoric and poetry with its divided attention to communication both with self and with others.

Classification: C50 E40

Keywords: mathematics and language; aesthetic aspects; communication; linguistics; writing style